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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000238

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NSC OFFICIAL LEE HAI-TUNG ON DEFENSE REVIEWS, ARMS
SALES, AND PROPOSED POLITICAL-MILITARY TALKS

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young,
Reasons: 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Taiwan's arms requests, including those approved, but not yet notified and those pending U.S. approval, are an essential part of the Ma Administration's defense and cross-Straits strategies, NSC Deputy Secretary General Lee Hai-Tung told the Acting Director on March 2. Lee identified two upcoming defense reviews and the move to an all volunteer military as priority defense policy issues for Taiwan, and expressed his support for the MOFA-proposed U.S.-Taiwan political-military talks. End Summary.

Arms Sales

¶2. (C) The Acting Director discussed defense issues on March 2 with NSC Deputy Secretary General Lee Hai-tung. A/DIR asked about Taiwan's arms purchase priorities. Lee expressed concern that Washington may not fully understand Taiwan's need and desire for F-16 C/D, additional PAC-3 batteries, Blackhawk helicopters, as well as the submarine feasibility study. Regardless of what happens in cross-Straits relations, Taiwan will continue to require weapons from the U.S. to ensure a credible deterrent force so that it can negotiate from a position of strength, Lee stressed.

¶3. (C) Noting that AIT will continue to convey Taiwan's concerns on this issue, A/DIR stressed that Washington needs to hear a constant and consistent message from Taiwan regarding its weapons needs - including where certain systems are no longer needed or wanted - and how these requests play into the broader defense and cross-Straits strategy. In this way, Washington decision makers can more effectively address the issue, A/DIR explained. Lee accepted this point and indicated that Taiwan will enhance its efforts in its views to the U.S. on its arms acquisition needs. Noting Taiwan's problems with the French, Lee expressed appreciation for the longstanding U.S.-Taiwan defense relationship, especially after-sale support, and stressed that Taipei looks forward to continued fruitful defense relations with the U.S. He said that Taiwan knows that it can rely only on the U.S. for long-term support.

Defense Reviews

¶4. (C) Lee noted that the completion of two major reports

and the establishment of an all volunteer force are top defense priorities for Taiwan. Taiwan's Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) (NOTE: dealing with a prospective view on Taiwan's defense policies, force structure, strategies and doctrine and weapons needs. END NOTE) should be made public by mid-March and the Defense White Paper is expected to be released in October. Lee underscored the extensive work the Ministry of National Defense (MND) is putting into both reports, adding that the final QDR will take into consideration analyses and recommendations from a variety of outside sources, including RAND and Armitage International. On the planned move to an all volunteer force, Lee stressed the need to look carefully at all aspects of this change, to include force structure, pay and benefits and training. The government is taking a thoughtful approach to making this change and intends to inform the public about its plans by June.

Political-Military Talks

15. (C) A/DIR noted Washington is still studying MOFA's proposal to hold pol-mil talks in Washington and has not reached a decision. In reviewing this proposal, the U.S. wants to make sure the new talks would benefit both sides, go beyond the current military-to-military dialogue, and not replicate already established talks. If Washington agrees to move forward with the pol-mil talks, A/DIR said, AIT POL will work with the Taiwan side to ensure their success. Lee thanked A/DIR for clarifying the issue. While at MND, Lee recalled, he had lobbied successfully for expanding the

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DoD-led U.S - Taiwan Strategic Dialogue (Monterey Talks) to include non-traditional military subjects such as critical infrastructure protection. Lee thought the MOFA proposal was worth pursuing and looked forward to future updates.
YOUNG